

United States Senate

May 20, 2026

Chancellor Raymond Rodrigues
State University System of Florida
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chancellor Rodrigues:

When I served as Governor and you were in the state legislature, Florida became the number one state for higher education in 2017. Together, we put a stop to never ending tuition increases and I'm proud Florida has led the nation with over 10 consecutive years of zero tuition increases. The single focus of higher education is to help students get good paying jobs. I have never understood why many higher education leaders have little or no concern for helping students get good paying jobs. Something has to change.

This week, the University of Florida (UF) announced the unanimous recommendation of Dr. Stuart Bell as the sole finalist to become President of UF. While I don't know Dr. Bell, it is clear to me that once again, UF has engaged in a search process that lacked any transparency or public input and failed to interview three candidates as mandated under Florida law. The public and students have no idea if this candidate will be successful at helping UF graduates get good paying jobs since there has not been any public input. As you know, I was very critical of the process that transpired with Dr. Santa Ono and it was good the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) rejected his appointment.

I am appreciative that UF's Board Chair Mori Hosseini asked to meet with me last week to update me on the Presidential search process. But, after that meeting, what remains unclear to me is why Dr. Donald Landry who has been interim president was not considered. Just like Dr. Bell, I personally do not know Dr. Landry or have enough familiarity as to whether he would be the right person to lead UF. **But, what I do know is that Dr. Landy has a clause in his contract that he would be awarded a multimillion-dollar payout if he failed to become the permanent president at UF. That is crazy.**

To be clear, I am not advocating for any potential candidate. Frankly, how could I? No one really knows anything about either of these people, or any other potential candidate, because there was no public search or vetting process.

There needs to be an investigation of Dr. Landry's contract. It is my understanding the UF Board did not vote on it, nor did the BOG. I am not aware of any public discussion on whether a payout of this size has any merit. I have served on many boards. It is my understanding that the UF Board delegated its authority on a multimillion-dollar contract solely to its Chair. I don't understand how that process is in the best interest of the university, its students and taxpayers. It begs the question as to why UF even bothers to have a governing board.

This week's announcement by UF also gives no clear reason as to why Dr. Landry was not suited for the job. Maybe he was, maybe he wasn't, I don't know. No one knows. Again, it's only fair to the thousands of UF students and families who pay tuition and are hoping for a good paying job that there is a clear explanation as to why Dr. Landry is about to walk away with millions of dollars for not getting a job. Who is paying for this?

Additionally, according to recent reporting by [Fox 13 in Tampa](#), UF's law school awarded Florida's appointed Attorney General a \$100,000 job to teach a few hours a week, when similarly situated professors make \$5,000. I was told this arrangement was done by UF so the Attorney General would hire more UF Law grads. I don't know the Attorney General, but that is frankly bizarre and if true, it demonstrates a pattern of malfeasance in UF's hiring and contracting processes. Does that mean all Florida law schools need to retain the Attorney General?

There are two major problems at UF that I believe need to be addressed next year by the Florida legislature and our next Governor to bring back transparency and stop these contracts that circumvent any public review or discussion. UF students, parents, faculty and taxpayers have lost their seat at the table, and it must be reclaimed.

1. **Problem #1 - UF's Contracting Process:** I am requesting any and all contracts from all institutions in the State University System that have hired elected officials or their families and how their compensation compares to similarly situated faculty members. I am also requesting all contracts from all institutions in the State University System that have provisions where there is a payout if someone doesn't get a permanent job, like in the case with Dr. Landry. It is vital that our incoming state leaders next session consider outlawing the abdication of any State University Board's work to fully review and vet in their governance policies.
2. **Problem #2 - UF's Lack of a Transparent Presidential Search:** As I said last year during the Santa Ono search, the law signed in 2022 on presidential searches is flawed. The current law is being implemented in a matter that allows much of the selection process to be shielded from the public. The board interview should

not be the only and final arena for the public to learn about the sole candidate, and it is being interpreted in such a way that only one candidate is often sent to our university boards to consider. I am frankly tired of hearing “there is only one sole finalist because no one else was willing to do a public interview.” That is BS. Are there really no other qualified people on this planet willing to go through a public interview to be the President of one of our nation’s most premier public institutions? Give me a break. Under BOG regulations, the search committee has an obligation to explain why they are bringing the board fewer than three candidates. I look forward to hearing that explanation at their upcoming public meeting.

Finally, under the existing law, portions of the process are now done privately, outside of the sunshine. At this time, any university can choose to do this open and transparently if they want to. UF does it in the dark. Universities shouldn’t be allowed to conduct a search without any oversight or input from students, staff, and the taxpayers, period.

The average salary for a graduate of UF is \$56,000 dollars six years after graduation. The average salaries for UF professors are about \$150,000 dollars.

In addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars UF receives from the state, it received over \$760 million from the federal government in 2024, and total awards, including grants and scholarships to students, reached a record \$1.25 billion dollars in 2025, including \$818 million dollars in federal contributions.

Since I have gotten to the US Senate, I have been very focused on all the waste at our higher education institutions and the billions of dollars that do nothing to help students get good jobs upon graduation. According to the Federal Reserve, over 40% of recent college graduates are working in jobs that typically don’t require a college degree. If I was a board member or president of a university and that was the case, I would be embarrassed.

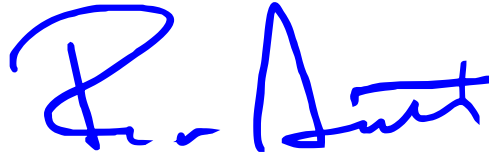
Frankly, what is occurring at UF sounds like something we would see coming out of states like California and New York, not the free state of Florida. Any dollar UF has should go toward helping its students get good paying jobs. Finally, this concept in higher education that there is a difference between a donation dollar, a tax dollar, or a dollar received from tuition is insane. Every single dollar under UF controls should benefit UF students to help them get high paying jobs upon graduation, full stop.

Some of you might be asking yourself, why the hell does Rick Scott care about who the President of UF is. I care because I want every kid to have the same chance to

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live the American Dream as I had. The American Dream starts with getting a great education as a path to a good paying job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott
United States Senator

cc: Florida BOG, UF Board of Trustees, Incoming Senate President Boyd, Incoming House Speaker Garrison